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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10 YEARS AFTER KOREAN REUNIFICATION  
TAGS: PROG PREL KS KN  
SUBJECT: FM YU DISCUSSES 6PT, ROK-PRC DIALOGUE DURING PRC  
VISIT

Classified By: DCM Bill Stanton. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

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Summary  
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¶11. (C) On March 24 MOFAT officials briefed us on Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan's March 20-21 trip to Beijing, his first overseas visit as FM. Yu met with Premier Wen Jiabao, State Councilor Dai Bingguo, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, and Wang Jairui, Chief of the International Liaison Department of the Communist Party, to lay the groundwork for President Lee Myung-bak's summit meeting in Beijing in the latter part of May. In his meetings, FM Yu presented a tougher ROK position on North Korea, while the Chinese urged patience and counseled against putting too much pressure on North Korea. The Chinese also proposed that the ROK establish a bilateral "strategic dialogue" with the PRC, an offer that may reflect Chinese concern about the new Korean Government's stronger policy toward North Korea and its interest in improved relations with the U.S. and Japan. END SUMMARY.

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Six Party Talks  
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¶12. (C) In a meeting with the DCM on March 24, newly-installed Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Yong-joon commented on FM Yu Myung-hwan's visit to Beijing. DFM Lee noted that Yu had used "strong language" with the Chinese to convey the new Korean Government's views on the North Korea nuclear issue. The Chinese should not have had any difficulty understanding the ROK's position, Lee said, indicating that Yu had taken a much tougher stance toward the DPRK than that of his predecessors.

¶13. (C) MOFAT Northeast Asian Affairs Bureau Director General Cho Tai-young provided further details to the Pol M/C in a separate meeting later in the day. According to Cho, FM Yu stressed to the Chinese that the U.S. had done its best to give the DPRK a face-saving way to move forward with its nuclear declaration and that North Korea should not miss this opportunity. Cho related that Yu had used a saying he had heard Americans use to illustrate his point, telling the Chinese that "North Korea had never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Yu strongly urged the PRC to persuade North Korea not to miss the opportunity for further progress in the Six-Party process. Yu also told his Chinese counterparts that President Lee Myung-bak wanted a policy of "reconciliation and cooperation" with North Korea, but that the Korean people required that North Korea reciprocate their goodwill. He warned that the DPRK must realize that South Korea would not provide substantial assistance to the DPRK

without progress on the nuclear issue.

¶ 14. (C) Cho said that the Chinese, while sharing the Korean assessment that the Six-Party Talks had reached a critical juncture, appeared frustrated with the process and were most likely distracted by events in Tibet and Taiwan. The Chinese urged the ROKG to be cautious about putting pressure on North Korea, calling instead for patience, saying it was "unhelpful to fixate on things from the past" in the effort to reach agreement on North Korea's nuclear declaration.

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ROK-PRC Relations  
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¶ 15. (C) In addition to FM Yu's discussions with the Chinese on North Korea, the second point worth noting, according to DFM Lee, was that the Chinese had proposed to Yu that the ROK establish a bilateral "strategic dialogue" with China. Yu had responded that President Lee Myung-bak also desired a more comprehensive bilateral dialogue with China that could be announced when Lee visited Beijing. DG Cho added that although there had been no ROK decision on what to call the dialogue, it would likely be held at the 1st Vice Minister level with Wang Yi.

¶ 16. (C) What was interesting about the Chinese proposal, DFM Lee observed, was that it was the ROK that had first proposed such a bilateral dialogue two years ago, and at that time it was the Chinese who had expressed reservations because of concerns over how North Korea would perceive such a move. Lee speculated that the new Chinese offer was in reaction to President Lee's adoption of a firmer policy toward North Korea. The DCM noted it might also be a response to President Lee's emphasis on improved relations with the U.S.

and Japan, as well as with China. DFM Lee agreed.

¶ 17. (C) Yu had also expressed to the Chinese the ROK's strong hope of further strengthening relations between the ROK and the PRC. FM Yu emphasized that the ROK's relationships with the United States, Japan and China should be viewed as a win-win situation, not as a zero-sum game, according to DG Cho. Yu's Chinese interlocutors had agreed with this view, while also similarly expressing a desire for stronger bilateral relations. In addition, the Chinese had expressed their appreciation that Yu had chosen to make China the first country he visited as Foreign Minister.

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Comment  
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¶ 18. (C) The Koreans initiated the meetings with both the DCM and the Pol M/C. This unprompted information sharing by the new ROKG marks a notable departure from the previous administration's practice. It appears to be an attempt to foster greater trust with the U.S., and is further concrete evidence of the Lee Myung-bak administration's intention to improve the U.S.-ROK bilateral relationship. END COMMENT.  
VERSHBOW